

## Say goodnight to bedtime anxiety



If you've done it once, you've done it thousands of times: Pajamas on, teeth brushed, lights out. But then, in a flash, a stressful work project, the phone call you forgot to make, or a big bill pops up in your mind. It can seem like a cruel joke when, just as your body winds down for sleep, your brain wakes up and starts worrying. In many cases, nighttime anxiety is the natural result of stressful, busy days. After work, family time, dinner, and housework, you may be physically exhausted—but your brain has pent-up feelings to process. Nighttime anxiety and insomnia can become a vicious cycle: the more anxious you get, the harder it is to fall asleep, and the harder it is to fall asleep, the more anxious you get! Here's how to stop this pattern from sabotaging your sleep and your peace of mind:

**Clear your mind.** Carve out some time to think and plan before bedtime. Off-load your to-dos or concerns in a journal or even just a piece of scrap paper.

**Create a relaxing routine.** Stretch out your bedtime routine to include some intentional relaxation. A warm bath, dim lights, and relaxing music can help to prepare your body and your mind for sleep. Once you're between the sheets, try progressive muscle relaxation, in which you tense a group of muscles for several seconds as you breathe in and then relax them as you exhale. Start with the muscles in your feet and work all the way up your body.

**Mind your fitness.** Getting regular exercise may help you fall asleep faster.

**Banish electronics from the bedroom.** Needless to say, scrolling through news and social media doesn't help your mind settle down.

**Don't stare at the ceiling.** If you're still awake after about 20 minutes, get up and do something calming in another room (and, remember, no screens).